

# Prepare Before, During and After an Earthquake

The New Madrid Seismic Zone caused the three largest earthquakes in the continental United States in 811-12. Every year, Southeast Missouri experiences over 200 measured events- some of which are large enough to be felt by local residents. An earthquake can be described as an “assault-with-no warning.” Because a New Madrid Earthquake is unpredictable, it is important for citizens to take steps to educate and protect themselves from an earthquake.

## Before:

- Identify safe spots and danger zones in each room.
- Consider buying earthquake insurance.
- Buy a 20-gallon garbage can to store drinking water, canned food, flashlights, first aid supplies, a battery operated radio, seasonal clothing and blankets. It may also become your “go kit” if you need to leave your home.
- Know where and how to shut off all utilities.
- Be sure your house is firmly anchored to its foundation.
- Anchor overhead lighting fixtures.
- Store bottled foods, glass, china and other breakable items on low shelves or in cabinets that can fasten shut. Place large or heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Fasten bookshelves to walls. Brace high and top heavy objects.
- Repair defective electrical wiring, leaky gas and inflexible utility connections.
- Securely fasten water heaters and gas appliances to wall studs.
- Keep some cash on hand, banks may not be open and businesses may not be able to immediately accept credit cards for purchases.
- Establish a savings account for post catastrophic expenses not covered by earthquake insurance.

## During:

- If indoors – take cover under sturdy furniture or against an inside wall, hold on, **“Drop, Cover and Hold.”** Stay away from the kitchen!
- If outdoors – stay there. Move away from buildings, streetlights and utility wires.
- In a high-rise building – take cover under sturdy furniture away from windows and outside walls. Stay in the building on the same floor. An evacuation may not be necessary. Wait for instructions from safety personnel. Do not use elevators.
- In a vehicle – stop as quickly as safety permits, and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses or utility wires.

## After:

- Check for injuries to yourself and those around you.
- Be prepared for aftershocks.
- Wear sturdy shoes in areas covered with fallen debris and broken glass.
- If the electricity is out – use flashlights or battery operated lanterns. Check the main utility panel.
- If you smell gas or hear a hissing sound – open a window and leave the building. Shut off the main gas valve outside the building.
- If water pipes are damaged – shut off the water supply at the main valve.
- Check your home, your chimney for structural damage and your appliances for damage.
- Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline and other flammable liquids.
- Do not flush toilets until you know the sewage lines are intact.
- Open cabinets cautiously. Beware of objects that can fall off shelves.
- Use the phone only to report a life-threatening emergency.
- Listen to the news reports for the latest emergency information.
- Stay off the streets - do not go sightseeing.